



The Investigative Project on Terrorism

Parvez Ahmed



Parvez Ahmed: Former Chairman of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

Parvez Ahmed's Resignation from CAIR

In July of 2008, Parvez Ahmed resigned from his position as Chairman of CAIR. Ahmed cited CAIR's "failure to be more proactive and positive in its promotion of Muslim civil rights" and its failure to include younger, "less-religious Muslims and encourage regular turnover of leadership ranks to ensure an infusion of new ideas," as reasons for his resignation.¹

Ahmed said that after pushing so hard for CAIR to be more open and transparent that he "got a little bit burned out." One of his goals for CAIR was to change the "council into an organization that doesn't sound anti-American when it's criticizing government policies."² "Ultimately, the majority of organizational stakeholders supported a vision for implementing change and growth that differed from that of Dr. Ahmed," CAIR wrote in a prepared statement.³

Parvez Ahmed on the CAIR-FBI Cutoff

¹ Jeff Brumley, "Chairman of Council on American-Islamic Relations resigns," *The Florida Times-Union*, July 8, 2008,

² Jeff Brumley, "Chairman of Council on American-Islamic Relations resigns," *The Florida Times-Union*, July 8, 2008,

³ Jeff Brumley, "Chairman of Council on American-Islamic Relations resigns," *The Florida Times-Union*, July 8, 2008,

Ahmed's criticism of CAIR continued after his resignation. In March of 2009 Ahmed wrote a blog piece critical of both CAIR and the FBI. He wrote:

"The FBI's rather abrupt move to cut off relationship with CAIR is just as misguided as a statement by a coalition of Muslim groups calling on American Muslims to 'consider suspending all outreach activities with FBI offices.'" ⁴

In this same blog, Ahmed criticized the FBI's decision to suspend its relationship with CAIR, saying "the lack of clarity in FBI's pronouncement has provided a pretext for some members of Congress to turn the ambiguity into a 'government-wide policy.'" ⁵

He added, "[I]f there is not evidence linking CAIR to any terrorist activity (in all of my association with the organization, I was not aware of any unlawful activity) then the FBI should re-engage with CAIR on issues of common concern, such as protecting civil liberties, even if they disagree with some view of the organization." ⁵

Ahmed does address the reason for the FBI's decision, evidence released in the Holy Land Foundation (HLF) Hamas financing case, but he claims that "The FBI does not offer any explanation as to why issues with some antecedents going back over fifteen years is reason to cut off ties with CAIR now." ⁶

In a similar article Ahmed wrote that CAIR "should not issue self-serving calls asking members of the American Muslim community to break off relationships with the FBI."

However, he had similar criticism for the FBI:

"Whatever legitimate concerns FBI has about CAIR, they need to give the organization's 11-member national governing board a chance to weigh the facts." ⁷

Parvez Ahmed's Recent Comments on Homegrown Terrorism

In a 2010 article published in several Muslim journals entitled "Homegrown Radicals: Complacency is not an Option," Ahmed criticized American Muslims for using the findings of a report which concluded that the number of American Muslims vulnerable to radicalization is small to forgo responsibility for combating extremism:

"The American Muslim community should not brush aside these facts by either taking a defensive posture or by being apologetic. Saying that only a handful of American Muslims are involved in terrorism while the vast majority of the community are

⁴ Parvez Ahmed, "FBI Should Not Involve Themselves in Political Theatre," Parvez Ahmed Blog, March 19, 2009, <http://drparvezahmed.blogspot.com/2009/03/fbi-should-not-involve-themselves-in.html>.

⁵ Parvez Ahmed, "FBI Should Not Involve Themselves in Political Theatre," Parvez Ahmed Blog, March 19, 2009, <http://drparvezahmed.blogspot.com/2009/03/fbi-should-not-involve-themselves-in.html>.

⁶ Parvez Ahmed, "FBI Should Not Involve Themselves in Political Theatre," Parvez Ahmed Blog, March 19, 2009, <http://drparvezahmed.blogspot.com/2009/03/fbi-should-not-involve-themselves-in.html>.

⁷ Parvez Ahmed, "Domestic surveillance: End the FBI's abuses, but work with them," *AltMuslim*, March 27, 2009, <http://www.altmuslim.com/a/a/a/2992/>.

productive citizens or asserting that America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are the source of such radicalization, while true does not solve the problem at hand. The better path for the community will be to conduct honest soul searching and enact proactive measures that can avoid such attention grabbing headlines in the first place."⁸

Ahmed also takes a shot at those who have in the past legitimized terrorism from groups by saying that they have "legitimate grievances:"

"Random violence targeting innocent civilians is immoral and ineffective. It can never be justified **no matter how severe the underlying grievance**. This message needs to be reinforced from the mosque pulpit to the kitchen table."⁹ [emphasis added]

Ahmed's Rhetoric during His Time with CAIR

Ahmed's departure from CAIR marked a change in his rhetoric towards the organization; specifically, he became more likely to criticize the organization's actions. However, as noted above, Ahmed still defends CAIR against allegations of extremism or terrorist connections. Ahmed's rhetoric during his time with CAIR was markedly more radical than his recent statements.

Downplaying Terrorism as a Threat

At a 2007 panel discussion on "Do US Policies Fuel Islamophobia?" sponsored by CAIR-Texas, then CAIR Chairman Parvez Ahmed said:

"It is important to bear in mind that **terrorists cannot destroy America**; we are too powerful and too resourceful a nation for terrorists to pose an existential threat to us. The chances of dying in a terrorist attack are one in eighty thousand in a lifetime, according to one study only the odds of dying from earthquake, flood, or firework are better. **We are more likely to die of heart disease or from not wearing our seatbelts than from a terrorist attack.**"¹⁰

Parvez Ahmed designated the **fear of Muslims in America as doing "more harm than anything that the 9/11 perpetrators could have ever imagined"** at a June 2007 CAIR-Ohio Annual Fundraiser.¹¹

Defense of Hamas and Hezbollah

In a May 2008 at the National Press Club in Washington D.C., then CAIR national board chairman Parvez Ahmed encouraged cooperation with Hamas, painting the organization as a legitimate and benevolent entity:

"Our posture of diplomacy, our policies have to be significantly altered from where we are today so that we address all issues. If we look at the State

⁸ Parvez Ahmed, "Homegrown Radicals: Complacency is not an Option," Parvez Ahmed Blog, February 3, 2010, <http://drparvezahmed.blogspot.com/2010/02/homegrown-radicals-complacency-is-not.html>.

⁹ Parvez Ahmed, "Homegrown Radicals: Complacency is not an Option," Parvez Ahmed Blog, February 3, 2010, <http://drparvezahmed.blogspot.com/2010/02/homegrown-radicals-complacency-is-not.html>.

¹⁰ Parvez Ahmed, "Do US Policies Fuel Islamophobia?" CAIR-Texas, July 8, 2007.

¹¹ Parvez Ahmed, "American Muslims: Connecting and Sharing," CAIR-Ohio 10th Annual Banquet Fundraiser, June 17, 2007.

Department's list of terrorist organizations, it lists many groups that are part of political processes, like Hamas and Hezbollah. They're part of the political processes in their societies, just like the IRA was part of political process in their society. And part of Al Qaeda's rage come from the un-interest or the lack of progress towards peace in the Middle East."¹²

Former CAIR National Chairman Parvez Ahmed has argued that Hamas and other groups using violence should be made part of the solution for stopping terrorism and should not be considered part of the problem:

“So drugs and guns, it obviously is not surprising that that combination led to what it led to. We also have to realize that to bring the extremists and people who are espousing political violence as a way of conflict resolution, to bring them into the fold of the civic process we have to encourage democratic and electoral processes, not by shunning people as we did in Palestine, those who won elections, not by shunning them, but by actually making them part of the solution.”¹³

Parvez Ahmed, chairman of (CAIR) addressed the ISNA 44th Annual Conference in Rosemont, Illinois, Aug. 31 – Sep. 3, 2007. Ahmed argued that Hamas is the same as the Irish Republican Army, which had a political wing in Sinn Fein.

“Now, one of the, probably one of the most argued, one of the most difficult topics for the Muslim community to talk about is the question about Hamas and Hezbollah. Hamas and Hezbollah are both on the U.S. State Department's list of foreign terrorist organizations. But Hamas and Hezbollah are also part of their democratic governments. They're elected representatives of their own people. So this presents a problem. And the challenges that often the detractors, who have a vested interest in perpetuating a situation of conflict in the Middle East try to use simple language and simple broad brush to lump them into the same category. And I call this 'Islamic exceptionalism.'... And the same thing has happened over here, that there has not been a (UI word) of distinction between a group like Al Qaeda and groups like Hamas and Hezbollah. And when you look at historical precedent, there is historical precedence in trying to make that distinction. And historical precedence is in Ireland, where Irish Republican Army and Sein Finn, they were, one part was terrorist; the other part was political. And ultimately, the solution to the problem in Ireland did not come until Britain negotiated with the Irish Republican Army. And that is a lesson that is often lost over here, not to

¹²Parvez Ahmed, “Separating Religion From Terror: Implications for U.S. Policy,” National Press Club, Washington, D.C. May 6, 2008.

¹³ Parvez Ahmed, “Separating Religion From Terror: Implications for U.S. Policy,” National Press Club, Washington, D.C., May 6, 2008.

mention that resistance to occupation is a legitimate right. It is, you can say it's a God given right."¹⁴

On Suicide Bombings

At the National Press Club in Washington D.C. in May of 2008 Ahmed said:

“Suicide bombings are the product of modern political violence. Suicide bombings by Muslims are not the result of any Islamic ideology, but rather they are the result of social political conditions of occupations.”¹⁵

This wasn't Ahmed's first attempt at suicide bombing apologetics. At an event at the Islamic Center at NYU in October of 2007 Ahmed said:

“Our going to Iraq caused terrorism the same way terrorism by some Palestinians is not the reason Israel keeps Palestine occupied. But it is the occupation that breeds resentment and enables terrorism to fester.”¹⁶

War on Terrorism is a War on Islam

Then CAIR Chairman Parvez Ahmed spoke at the National Press Club in Washington D.C. on May 6, 2008 on the topic “Separating Religion From Terror: Implications for U.S. Policy National Press Club.” During his speech he downplayed historical violent results of radical Islamist ideology:

“Extremism, no matter how abhorrent, cannot always be equated with violence. Only a tiny fraction of those who subscribe to these fundamentalist movement [sic] have engaged in acts of violence. Yet, Islam is clearly in the crosshairs of the global war on terrorism, as we saw unfortunately in President Bush's first statement after 9/11, some call it a Freudian slip, characterizing the response as a ‘crusade,’ or later on August 11, 2006 after the terrorist plot was thwarted in Britain that was planning to blow up airplanes. President Bush said that, ‘This nation is at war with Islamic fascists.’ Such provocative statements are at odds not only with the reality that Islam unequivocally condemns terrorism, but also the claim that the global war on terror is not a war against Islam.”¹⁷

“The new perception is that the United States has entered a war with Islam itself,” CAIR national board chairman Parvez Ahmed said July 17, 2007 at a National Press Club Forum.¹⁸

¹⁴ Parvez. Ahmed. ISNA 44th Annual Conference in Rosemont Illinois. August 31-Sept 3, 2007. [IPT Audio/Video]

¹⁵ Parvez Ahmed, “Separating Religion From Terror: Implications for U.S. Policy,” National Press Club, Washington, D.C., May 6, 2008.

¹⁶ Parvez Ahmed, “Islamophobia: Institutionalized Racism?” The Islamic Center at NYU, October 21, 2007.

¹⁷ Parvez Ahmed, “Separating Religion From Terror: Implications for U.S. Policy,” National Press Club, Washington D.C., May 6, 2008.

¹⁸ “Bush office is anti-Muslim, group says” *Washington Times*, July 17, 2007

In July 2007, in an op-ed for the *Dallas Morning News*, Ahmed wrote, “As a nation, we can ill afford the perception that we are at war with a faith practiced by more than a billion people accounting for more than a fifth of humanity today,”¹⁹ arguing that “Islamophobia” was on the rise in America.

Parvez Ahmed made a **blanket criticism of all U.S. Counterterrorism policy** in 2007 at a CAIR-Texas event:

“Unfortunately, after the tragic attacks on 9/11, **US policies have been largely driven by fear and thus to sustain these policies**, these unreasonable policies, the Bush administration and its surrogates have resorted to fear mongering and stereotyping Islam, and Muslims.”²⁰

At the same 2007 panel discussion on “Do US Policies Fuel Islamophobia?” sponsored by CAIR-Texas mentioned above, then **CAIR Chairman Parvez Ahmed said the FBI is trying to entrap,**

“the mentally ill, or the gullible people of the community and make them into poster cases, as they did in the JFK case or in other cases, of terrorism I think they are making a grave mistake. It is not securing our country it is only alienating the American Muslim community which is among the most patriotic and productive communities in America today.”²¹

At an August 2007 Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) Conference in Illinois, then CAIR Chairman Parvez Ahmed criticized the FBI and other branches of the government for not understanding the definition of “terrorism”:

“Even with the U.S. government, the FBI, the Department of Justice, Department of State – they all have different definitions of ‘terrorism.’ So you can see defining it and pinpointing it is a task that is very, very difficult. So from looking at various definitions, I was able to pull out some common elements. One of the elements that makes something terroristic or terrorism – violence, psychological impact and fear, perpetrated for a political goal, deliberate targeting of non-combatants, and then **some people say terrorism is limited to non-state actors. And this is where I disagree.**”²²

In 2004, Parvez Ahmed wrote an article for the *Seattle Times* in which he wrote:

“Public silence confirms an uncomfortable truth that since 9-11, the civil rights of some Americans have been compromised while the majority remains oblivious to the dangers that lurk around the corner.”²³

¹⁹ “Parvez Ahmed: U.S. can ill afford the perception that we are at war with Islam,” *Dallas Morning News*, July 5, 2007, http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/dn/opinion/viewpoints/stories/DN-ahmed_05edi.ART.State.Edition1.4319f5f.html.

²⁰ Parvez Ahmed, “Do US Policies Fuel Islamophobia?” CAIR-TX Panel Discussion, July 8, 2007.

²¹ Parvez Ahmed, “Do US Policies Fuel Islamophobia?” CAIR-Texas, July 8, 2007.

²² ISNA 44th Annual Conference, Rosemont, Illinois “Terrorism,” August 31 – September 3, 2007.

²³ Parvez Ahmed, “To earn my vote, Kerry must protect my civil rights,” *The Seattle Times*, July 27, 2004.

He added:

“The onus of a severe curb on civil liberties fell largely on Muslims and Arabs, many of whom were nonvoters. A voiceless and defenseless group of people was soon to become the collateral damage of the war on terror. Since 9-11, this group has been subjected to special interviews, registrations, automatic detentions and deportations. Many have been tried in secret, while others had no trials afforded to them. Some have been detained based on their political opinions, others for their political associations with disfavored groups. Some Muslim charities have been shut down and many have been intimidated into silence.”

In a 2004 article in the *Sun-Sentinel* Ahmed was quoted saying:

"Muslims in America have been made the scapegoats in the witch hunt that ensued after 9-11. Our freedoms have been compromised by invoking fear and paranoia."²⁴

In a special to the *Sun-Sentinel* Ahmed wrote in 2004 that:

“Sept. 11 not only brought out the best of America but also its worst. Racial profiling and massive dragnets discriminated, harassed, intimidated and deported thousand of Arabs and Muslims who had nothing to do with the condemnable crimes of terrorism.”²⁵

Criticism of Government Raids

In a 2002 letter to Congressman George Gekas Ahmed criticized government raid of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIT) and the Muslim World League (MWL).

“Muslims nationwide are outraged over law enforcement raids on a number of Muslim offices and homes in Virginia and Georgia. Targets of the raids included some of the most respected leaders and organizations in the American Muslim community, including the International Institute of Islamic Thought, the Graduate School of Islamic Social Sciences, the Muslim World League and the Fiqh Council of North America.”²⁶

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) is part of a complex web of companies, charities and not-for-profit corporations known as the SAAR Network or the Safa Group, which has been under investigation since 2002.²⁷ In addition to this, declassified FBI documents identify leaders of IIIT and the SAAR Foundation “as being members of the Ikhwan Al-Muslimeen (Muslim Brotherhood).”²⁸ The documents also note that “all the subsidiary and

²⁴ Dania Beach, “Civil Rights Eroding, Muslims Say; Fear, Paranoia Linger After 9-11, Some Maintain,” *Sun-Sentinel*, July 18, 2004.

²⁵ Parvez Ahmed, “Hate Hurts America,” *Sun-Sentinel*, May 10, 2004.

²⁶ Parvez Ahmed, “Letter to Representative George Gekas,” April 6, 2002.

²⁷ “In the Matter Involving 555 Grove Street, Herndon, Virginia and Related Locations, 02-MG114,” Affidavit of Special Agent David Kane, sec. X 111 (ED VA March 2002).

²⁸ *Ibid.*

sponsoring Muslim organizations under the control of the IIIT and the SAAR Foundation are in fact Ikhwan organizations.”²⁹

Founded in 1962 to “promote Islamic unity,” the Muslim World League (MWL) is one of the largest of the Saudi Islamic evangelical charities. According to a government trial proffer in 2003, Osama bin Laden identified MWL as one of three Muslim charities that provided the primary sources of Al Qaeda’s funds during conversations a decade earlier with former senior Al Qaeda lieutenant Jamal Ahmed Al-Fadl. MWL’s U.S. office was raided in 2002 as part of a massive terrorism financing probe.

Defense of the now Convicted Holy Land Foundation

In October of 2007 Parvez Ahmed claimed that “Zionist organizations” were far worse offenders than the Holy Land Foundation, which was found guilty of financing Hamas in 2008:

“However, it turns out that there is **much more evidence for the connection between donations by American Zionist organizations and charities and terrorism than anything that the Holy Land Foundation has done.**”

[...]

“What this comes down to is that Zionists and Christian Zionist charities that support occupation, that the U.S. government and its Justice Department corrupted in this case by the influence of powerful Zionists and ultra-radical Christian lobbyists will only engage in selection prosecution against Muslim charities and organizations.”³⁰

Parvez Ahmed, at a 2007 CAIR Dallas banquet likened the HLF trial to the entire American Muslim community being “under fire,” citing the listing of many unindicted co-conspirators in the trial:

“It is not the Holy Land Foundation that is under fire, but it is the entire American Muslim community is under fire.”³¹

Ahmed expressed similar thoughts on the unindicted co-conspirators list during a 2007 program on American Public radio:

“They’re pretty much alleging that pretty much every Muslim organization is part of a conspiracy.”³²

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Parvez Ahmed, CAIR-NY, “Islamophobia: Institutionalized Racism?” The Islamic Center at NYU, October 21, 2007.

³¹ Parvez Ahmed, CAIR-Dallas banquet, Renaissance Dallas Hotel, August 18, 2007.

In an article entitled, “A Case ‘Strung Together with Macaroni Noodles,’” Dr. Parvez Ahmed, former Chairman of the Council on American Islamic Relations, attacked the American trial of the HLF in an issue of *The Message*. He accused the US government of a witch-hunt and Islamophobia, for trying officials of the charity organization who were linked to Hamas terrorists responsible for killing American and Israeli civilians:

“The case against HLF was a political witch-hunt that had nothing to do with America's security. The closure of HLF appears to be an attempt to block humanitarian assistance to some of the most impoverished people in the world - Palestinians living under Israel's Apartheid-like occupation.”³³

Ahmed also stated:

“Islam teaches us to be compassionate and merciful. We carry out the principles of our faith when we send our money to feed, clothe and shelter the least fortunate among us. Those who cast doubt about our intentions and our commitment to carry out our religious obligations are promoting a form of Islamophobia.”³⁴

Defense of CAIR-linked Individuals

In 2004 Ahmed wrote-off the illegal actions of Bassem Khafagi and Randall Royer, saying that there was “no terrorist crime.” He added that, “certainly no organization can be held responsible for the personal activities of its employees or associates, especially after they leave or before they join an organization.”³⁵

[Randall Royer](#) was in fact still employed with CAIR when he committed the criminal action to which he pled guilty. CAIR’s claim that Royer did not plead guilty to any charges of terrorism conceals allegations against Royer for his ties to [Lashkar-e-Taiba](#), a designated Foreign Terrorist Organization and charges against Royer for conspiracy to levy war against the U.S. and conspiracy to provide material support to Al Qaeda, another terrorist organization.

³² Parvez Ahmed, “A chill on Muslim giving: FBI guards entrance to the Holy Land Foundation,” American Public Media: Marketplace, October 22, 2007,

http://marketplace.publicradio.org/display/web/2007/10/22/a_chill_on_muslim_giving accessed July 1, 2009.

³³ Parvez Ahmed, “A Case ‘Strung Together With Macaroni Noodles,’” *Florida Sun-Sentinel*, November 24, 2007.

³⁴ Parvez Ahmed, “A Case ‘Strung Together With Macaroni Noodles,’” *Florida Sun-Sentinel*, November 24, 2007.

³⁵ Parvez Ahmed, “Accusations of terrorist support are wrong, divisive,” *SP Times*, September 27, 2004, http://www.sptimes.com/2004/09/27/Hernando/Accusations_of_terror.shtml.

According to [a biography](#) posted on IslamOnline.net, Royer began working as a CAIR communication specialist in 1997. According to [media reports](#), he continued to work for CAIR at least through the beginning of October 2001.³⁶

Strictly speaking, CAIR is correct in saying Royer's guilty plea to weapons charges did not mention terrorism. On the other hand, he never contested prosecution claims that he had an AK-47 style rifle and 219 rounds of ammunition [in his car](#) during a September 2001 traffic stop, or that he engaged in propaganda work for Lashkar-e-Taiba and "[fired at](#) Indian positions in Kashmir." Lashkar-e-Taiba was [designated](#) a Foreign Terrorist Organization on December 26, 2001.

CAIR claims that "Khafagi was never an 'employee' of CAIR, but Executive Director Nihad Awad [acknowledges](#) "[h]e was commissioned as an independent contractor for CAIR, effective November 2, 2001."

Khafagi also served as president of the Islamic Assembly of North America, which the *Washington Post* [reported](#) in 2003 was suspected of being "a powerful engine for groups that promote teachings and religious *fatwas* -- orders that advocate violence against the United States -- issued by two radical Saudi clerics."

Khafagi was arrested and indicted in January 2003 on bank fraud charges.³⁷ "At the time of his arrest," the *Associated Press* [reported](#), "he was community affairs director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, a Muslim civil rights and advocacy group based in Washington."³⁸ In September 2003, he pleaded guilty to bank and visa fraud³⁹ and agreed to be deported to Egypt.⁴⁰

³⁶ See also: Dave Lenckus, "US Muslims Advised to Address Racism Risks; Advocates Encourage Community Work," *Crain Communications, Inc. Business Insurance*, October 1, 2001.

³⁷ *US v. Khafagi*, Case No. 03-CR 80087, "Indictment," (E.D. Mich. February 13, 2003).

³⁸ "Former Head of Islamic Charity Sentenced in Fraud Case," *Associated Press*, November 13, 2003 and Bill Morlin, "Egyptian with UI Ties Held in Probe," *Spokane Spokesman-Review*, March 14, 2003.

³⁹ "Ex-Head of Islamic Charity Pleads Guilty," *Associated Press*, September 10, 2003.

⁴⁰ "Former Head of Islamic Charity Sentenced in Fraud Case," *Associated Press*, November 13, 2003.